Progressive Calvinism

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Information For Readers

This is the third, and last, of our introductory mailings. *Those interested who have not yet subscribed should do so now.*

Subscriptions are on a calendar-year basis, from January each year through December. The subscription price is $2.00 ($1.00 for students).

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM does not present *miscellaneous* ideas, but a *systematic set* of ideas. It is the *regular* readers who will be able to evaluate later issues.

An important purpose of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is to analyze pseudo-Biblical ideas which are being promoted under the belief that they are Calvinistic or Christian, namely, ideas on brotherly love which are sanctimonious, and on the social order which are destructive, and on the capacities of the human mind which are insultingly arrogant toward God.

A Famous Political Philospher Has Declared That The Trend Of All Human Institutions Is Downward

There are differing opinions regarding the real trend in human events. Some say the natural trend is upward; they are optimists. Others say the natural trend is downward; they are realists. We quote one of these realists, a famous political philosopher.

To Insure A Long Existence To Religious Sects Or Republics, It Is Necessary Frequently To Bring Them Back To Their Original Principles

There is nothing more true than that all the things of this world have a limit to their existence; but those only run the entire course ordained for them by Heaven that do not allow their body to become disorganized, but keep it unchanged in the manner ordained, or if they change it, so do it that it shall be for their advantage, and not to their injury. And as I speak of mixed bodies, such as republics or religious sects, I say that those changes are beneficial that bring them back to their original principles. And those are the best-constituted bodies, and have the longest existence, which possess the intrinsic means of frequently renewing themselves, or such as obtain this renovation in consequence of some extrinsic accidents. And it is a truth clearer than light that, without such renovation, these bodies cannot continue to exist; and the means of renewing them is to bring them back to their original principles. For, as all religious republics and monarchies must have within themselves some goodness, by means of which they obtain their first growth and reputation, and as in the process of time this goodness becomes corrupted, it will of necessity destroy the body unless something intervenes to bring it back to its normal condition.

* * *

Now with regard to religions we shall see that revivals are equally necessary, and the best proof of this is furnished by our own [Roman Catholic], which would have been entirely lost had it not been brought back to

its pristine principles and purity by Saint Francis and Saint Dominic; for by their voluntary poverty and the example of the life of Christ, they revived the sentiment of religion in the hearts of men, where it had become almost extinct. The new orders which they established were so severe and powerful that they became the means of saving religion from being destroyed . . .

The author of the foregoing is Niccolo Machiavelli.

Using the foregoing statements as the base from which to reach specific conclusions we arrive at the following:

1. The trend of Calvinist churches (in common with all churches) is downward. Similarly, the natural trend of the Christian Reformed Church is downward.

2. The Calvinist churches would not have lasted long if their first principles had not been good. Similarly, the Christian Reformed Church would not have lasted as long as it has, if its first principles had not been good.

3. The Calvinist churches periodically need a restoration to their first principles; similarly, the Christian Reformed Church.

In this connection the important question is: has the time arrived for an internal renewing of the Calvinist churches, or of an individual denomination?

In the Netherlands there was a strong declaration on Calvinism at the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619. After a long decline there was a restoration in 1834. Then there was a second restoration in 1886. The time intervals were in round numbers 200 years and 50 years.

F. N.

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The Thought That Christianity's Message Has Become Unrealistic In Respect To An Aspect of This Life

Many people are indifferent or hostile to the Christian religion. It is not all *their* fault.

If people do not believe what you tell them, there must be some explanation. Some of the simple explanations are: (1) you are known to be untruthful; (2) you do not act yourself as you say others should; or (3) your message lacks plausibility (that is, you may be known as a fairly truthful person and you may be an exemplary Christian, but your version of Christianity may sound unimportant, or unreal, or foolish).

This message of Christians to non-Christians pertains to one or both of two subjects: (1) to this life, and (2) to the life-to-come. On the latter there is not daily proof, and that part of the Christian religion has a fair hold on mankind, mankind being by nature credulous (believing what they hear). Belief in a future life cannot be proved to be false; and it is a comforting idea. The result is that Christianity more or less survives as far as its future-life ideas are concerned.*

In regard to the influence of Christians on non-Christians, in matters pertaining to *this* life, that situation has a tendency toward deteriorating steadily or at least is unsatisfactory. In matters pertaining to *this* life, people can see every day what works out and what does not.

The message of Christians to non-Christians about matters pertaining to this life appears, generally nowadays, to be implausible and too-pious to be palatable. This manifestation of piety groups itself around the idea of *brotherly love*. Christians have come to teach a doctrine on brotherly love that is against nature, nobody lives by it, and practically nobody will ever be willing to live by it. The subject of brotherly love *in personal relations* has become unrealistic talk, and in *social relations* is actively in the process of destroying society. Non-Christians may not take the time

*This is the reason why even in decadent Christian churches ministers are in demand for funerals.

to investigate thoroughly, but they "sense" it. Having a reasonable amount of intelligence, many people are drifting away from irrationalistic teachings of the Christian religion on practical subjects.

Our analysis of causes of present-day irreligion, therefore, is that it is not entirely (1) total depravity, (2) feebleness of Christian testimony, (3) nonexemplary lives, and (4) future-life doubts, but (5) to a considerable extent *a message unsuited for this life.* That unsuited message consists in mistaken notions about brotherly love in personal conduct and in social relations.

In the February issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we declared that there was a serious confusion about the meaning of the term, *brotherly love,* and we summarized the plain teaching of Scripture on the subject, without far-fetched "extensions" of what Scripture teaches. Scripture is not sanctimonious (not hyper-pious) about brotherly love, but is a most-practical and common-sense book.

In this issue we proceed to a further analysis of brotherly love. We believe that this analysis will do several things which will be helpful, namely, (1) it will throw additional light on the Scripture texts already quoted; (2) it will throw light on a basic characteristic of sin; (3) it will be a warning blinker that certain ideas commonly associated with (added to) brotherly love should not be associated with it; and (4) the clarifying statements by Christ about brotherly love in the Sermon on the Mount will be more readily understood and more easily analyzed.

It is regretted that it is not possible to outline all phases of scriptural teaching about *brotherly love* in one issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. Readers may have some doubts and objections which will not be answered until the later instalments. We shall endeavor to cover *all* phases of brotherly love eventually. And what we neglect or that concerning which we may be in error will certainly bring forth objections, which we shall be able to answer or which we shall promptly accept as valid corrections.

Our "general approach" is that we intend to follow Scripture *strictly,* and be strict constructionists. Further, we are *against adding* anything to the scriptural doctrine of brotherly love. Further, we have a special objection to adding something to brotherly love which is *more pious* than Scripture; with Solomon we heartily say:

"Be not righteous overmuch." (Ecc. 7:16a) Further, we object to a nonscriptural definition of brotherly love which common sense tells everybody is too idealistic and is simply impractical. And finally, we object to a definition which will make life not worth living, because it destroys the basis of temporal, human happiness.

What follows is the second instalment on the general subject of "Understanding and Misunderstanding the Hebrew-Christian Law of Love."

F. N.

Understanding and Misunderstanding The Hebrew-Christian Law of Love

(The first instalment under this general title appeared in the February, 1955, issue with the subtitle: "The Plain Teaching of Scripture Regarding Brotherly Love." The second instalment follows.)

B. ANALYTICAL DISSECTION OF SCRIPTURAL LAW OF BROTHERLY LOVE

In this issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we are endeavoring to analyze the idea of neighborly love* *systematically*. We shall do that under the following subheadings:

1. The Ultimate Standard for Loving Neighbor
2. The Violation of the Law of Brotherly Love
3. The Five Great Seemingly Restrictive Commandments
4. The Great Free Area in Life, and Happiness Dependent on Freedom
5. The Ultimate Purposes of Life
6. Contributing to Chaos
7. Contributing to Violence and Tyranny

*Throughout this analysis, neighborly love and brotherly love are used interchangeably.

8. Contributing to Human Arrogance
9. A Rough Classification of the Motivations Involved In the Manifestation of Brotherly Love
10. Summary

It can happen to a man when he has lost his way that he cannot recognize what he really knows. Because he has his directions turned around, everything appears new and strange. Suddenly in a flash he realizes where he is; his mind in one big turn reshifts everything that he sees, out of a false "frame of reference." If he had thought that a house before him was a house in a strange town, he suddenly realizes that it is a neighbor's house in his own town. He wonders how he could have been so lost.

The basic "frame of reference" in what follows has undergone a considerable alteration. Some readers may not get beyond the point of agreeing (or disagreeing) with specific parts of the picture we present. But a reasonably careful reader will, we hope, realize that not only have certain ideas on brotherly love been presented here but that the "frame of reference" is generally different from the popular frame of reference. Only after the individual ideas (as if they were individual houses in our illustration) have been seen in the new frame of reference will the full import of the individual ideas become apparent. When you understand brotherly love as is here outlined, the world around you will probably look different to you than it did before. The changed frame of reference which is here presented is not the frame of reference with which we ourselves began. We began with the traditional frame of reference. We think the widely accepted frame of reference is naive and primitive. We have outlined, we believe, a realistic frame of reference. And that realistic frame of reference is strictly in agreement with Scripture.

The Ultimate Standard For Loving Neighbor

The grand summary of the law on brotherly love reads, thou shalt love thy neighbor AS THYSELF.

The two important words which have been printed in capital letters designate what the ultimate standard is for loving the neighbor. The ultimate standard is yourself.

It is a false statement to say that there is any higher standard for loving the neighbor. It is a false statement to bring God into the comparison and make His love a part of the analysis. The reason why we affirm what we affirm is because we are exactly quoting Scripture. The statement in Scripture reads, thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself.*

The most obvious idea in the famous law is that you will love *yourself.* The law takes that for granted. It implies, too, that loving yourself is *meritorious;* it is a very *good* thing; it is a very *natural* thing. Further, loving yourself can have no meaning unless it means pursuing your self-regarding interests. And all you need to do is love your neighbor as much. You pursue your self-regarding interests; and you permit him to pursue his self-regarding interests.

Of course, if there is a reader who does not accept that plain idea, but who declares that we should love the neighbor *more* than ourselves, that is, that we must love our neighbor by some other standard than the scriptural standard, he will find it difficult to agree with anything that follows. If we are not together in the beginning of an analysis on something as plain and indisputable as the foregoing, then we will certainly not be together later on.

Every man is then his own standard for neighborly love. That standard is individualistic. It is not collectivistic.

I (*A*) am not ordered to love *B* as *B* loves himself, or as *C* loves himself, or as *A* plus *B* plus *C* plus *D* plus *E*, etc., love themselves. The recipient of my love, *B*, is not the standard. Neither has *C*, a third party, any voice in the matter. Nor does Scripture take an abstraction, man's collective love for his neighbor, as the standard for loving the neighbor. There is nothing in Scripture which says that a majority, who may pass a law, and who may believe themselves motivated by brotherly love, can set a standard for one individual to love another individual. Scripture is much too realistic, and too wise, to develop any abstract standards for neighborly love. Instead, Scripture assumes individual and individualistic self-love; and the magnificent commandment is: love your neighbor *as much as* yourself.

It may be difficult for some who profess the Christian faith to accept so modest an objective for brotherly love. They may struggle toward a nobler objective, namely, to love the neighbor *more* than themselves. That idealistic aim is an objective they may feel free to attempt to grasp, and they may even believe they have grasped it. But it is worthy of consideration that the ideal involves an unsolvable conflict. The problem is this: whosoever sets out to love his neighbor *more* than himself develops a problem of reconciling such love with the requirement to love God more than all else.

The "first and great commandment" to love God more than self and more than all else becomes practically meaningless if 2,400,000,000 neighbors are also going to be loved by you more than you love yourself. What part of this greater love that you propose to have is to be allocated to God and what part to all other men?

One definition of love is that you do what the person loved wishes you to do. A man "loves" his wife when he does what may be unpleasant for himself but does please his lady. A man may be said to "love" God when he does what God wants him to do, although it is a hard chore for the man to do it. Well then, there are to be 2,400,000,001 (all mankind plus God) whom you must please. It is an impossible task. When your own inclinations conflict with God's revealed will, you must submit. Suppose a thousand of your neighbors have a will conflicting with God's revealed will and your own wishes, what will you do?

If a man says that he loves his wife more than himself, or if a mother says she loves a child more than herself, these are cases of love where the person speaking makes a highly individualistic comparison, namely, they are willing to sacrifice themselves for one or two others *at their own expense*. Such persons have a sense of *values* relative to wife or child. They pursue those *values* at terrific cost to themselves. But the *values* they pursue mean more to them than life itself. In short, they are still pleasing themselves; it is worth more to them to watch all night at the bedside of a sick child than to go to bed themselves. Their own sense of values constitutes their norm or standard. They *themselves*, their *values*, are still the standard.

A broad discussion on the nature of self-love will be undertaken later in this analysis. The matter is rested at this point with the mere reiteration, thou shalt love thy neighbor AS THYSELF.

The Violation of the Law of Neighborly Love

If the law, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, means that you are not required to love your neighbor *more* than yourself, the implication is equally true that the law prohibits you from loving your neighbor *less* than yourself. In fact, this is the only deviation from the law which has any reality. Loving your neighbor more than yourself is usually self-delusion or hypocrisy; but loving your neighbor less than yourself is a terrible reality and one of the most prevalent evils in the world. All the real attention to the commandment on brotherly love is directed to the disheartening reality that we do *not* love our neighbors as ourselves. If we all will get rid of the sanctimoniousness about loving our neighbors more than ourselves, and will make some real progress on loving our neighbors as much as ourselves, then the world will soon be a much better place in which to live.

Considering that the law of brotherly love declares self and self-regarding interests to be the standard, then where does the lack of brotherly love come in? Because the whole idea can be easily illustrated by an anecdote, we shall quote the story on Epstean's Law. The source of this is Albert Jay Nock's *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man.* Nock in his lifetime was a magazine editor and a noted essayist. Nock tells the story as follows:

> I was at lunch in the Uptown Club of New York with an old friend, Edward Epstean, a retired man of affairs. I do not remember what subject was under discussion at the moment; but whatever it was, it led to Mr. Epstean's shaking a forefinger at me, and saying with great emphasis, "I tell you, if self-preservation is the first law of human conduct, exploitation is the second."
>
> This remark instantly touched off a tremendous flashlight in my mind. I saw the generalisation which had been staring me in the face for years without my having sense enough to recognise and identify it. Spencer and Henry George had familiarised me with the formula that

man tends always to satisfy his needs and desires with the least possible exertion; but they had given me no idea of its immense scope, its almost illimitable range of action. If this formula were sound, as unquestionably it is, then certainly exploitation would be an inescapable corollary, because the easiest way to satisfy one's needs and desires is by exploitation. Indeed, if one wished to split hairs, one might say that exploitation is the first law of conduct, since even in self-preservation one tends always to take the easiest way; but the question of precedence is a small matter.

In an essay which I published some time ago, having occasion to refer to this formula, I gave it the name of Epstean's law, which by every precedent I think it should have. In their observations on the phenomena of gravitation, Huyghens and Kepler anticipated Newton closely. It was left for Newton to show the universal scope of an extremely simple formula, already well understood *in limine,* and hence this formula is known as Newton's law. As a phenomenon of finance, it had long been observed that "bad money drives out good," but Sir Thomas Gresham reduced these observations to order under a formula as simple as Newton's, and this formula is known as Gresham's law. So for an analogous service, more importtant than Gresham's and, as far as this planet is concerned, as comprehensive as Newton's, I thought that the formula, *Man tends always to satisfy his needs and desires with the least possible exertion,* should bear the name of Epstean's law.

I think Nock stumbled onto an enlightening interpretation of the law of brotherly love, namely:

1. There are legitimate self-regarding interests, or as Nock says, the law of self-preservation; and

2. The first thing we all do in order to pursue our self-regarding interests is to exploit our neighbor if we can, by violence (sixth commandment), by wanting his wife (seventh commandment), by theft (eighth commandment), by fraud (ninth commandment), and by continuous envy (tenth commandment).

Sin in the relations between men, is not the pursuit of legitimate self-regarding interests. Sin, on the contrary, is the pursuit of legitimate self-regarding interests *at the expense of the neighbor,* by spending our time and talents figuring out ways of exploiting him. Instead of pursuing his self-regarding interests by the right means, man operates as an exploiter, using violence, wife stealing, theft, fraud and unrestrained covetousness.

The "frame of reference" in which in this analysis we set sin is not that self-regarding interests are wrong but that the means we adopt to satisfy our self-regarding interests are wrong. The difference between Scripture and socialism-communism is summarized in that antithesis. Scripture assumes and approves self-regarding interests as the standard for relations of men to men; socialism-communism declares that self-regarding interests are wrong.

Albert Jay Nock realized the ineradicable nature of self-regarding interests. That is something created by God. It took a conversation with a friend, Epstean, for him suddenly to realize how prevalent sin is and what its nature is, namely, a spontaneous inclination toward exploitation of the neighbor.

Of course, it is not necessary to use Nock's label for this exploitation, towit, Epstean's Law. We could just as well have said *total depravity,* relative to the Second Table of the Decalogue. That would be the standard way for a Calvinist to express the same idea.

The Five Great Seemingly Restrictive Commandments

Freedom to pursue our legitimate self-regarding interests — in other words, loving *ourselves* — is a wonderful freedom and presents a great vista for life and activity and pleasure before us. But two requirements close in or seem to close in on that fair view: (1) what does God demand of us, and (2) maybe life is not worth living if we may not exploit our neighbor.* The "world" often says that religion is a kill-joy, and a great unpleasantness.

*There are also sins which constitute self-damage. These are not being analyzed in this study.

The definition we have thus far given of neighborly love is a great liberation from narrow-minded ethics. We have, indeed, opened up all of life to the pursuit of the self-regarding interests, (1) except that we may not exploit the neighbor, and (2) *except as we have an obligation to God*. The *second* exception we are not discussing here; we are now addressing ourselves to how much life is worth living if we may not, and do not, exploit our neighbor.

Ethics can be taught so that it looks as if you may not do this, and you may not do that. In many respects Christian ethics is taught that way. Probably most children from Christian homes get the impression that the Christian religion narrows the range of pleasure in this life. It surely does if we must all knuckle under to our neighbors. But it surely does not really narrow life and its pleasures if everything is free except exploitation of the neighbor.

Scripture in fact does not admit that doing the will of God has a penalty attached to it in the form of less happiness. On the contrary, doing the will of God is presented in Scripture as being boundlessly rewarding and satisfying and happiness-producing.

In regard to the Second Table of the Law its prohibition of violence in the sixth commandment is a blessing and not a penalty. We all live more happily if the threat of violence in our lives is reduced to a minimum, and life would be better still if all violence could be eliminated. Similarly, it may be momentarily pleasant to possess the neighbor's wife, but a coldly calculating mind will eventually end up with the conclusion that the game is not worth the candle; eventually, there can be only disorganization and unhappiness; figure it out for yourself, if you have a brain. And similarly, there is no abiding happiness in theft or in fraud or in falsehood. The only happy and prosperous societies are those in which lives are safe (sixth commandment), possession of mate is safe (seventh commandment), possession of property is safe (eighth commandment), truthfulness is observed (ninth commandment), and contentment prevails (tenth commandment).

But why then do those commandments give people the impression that Christian ethics is so confining and almost as if they were prison walls? This is pure hallucination in a sense, namely, by following Epstean's law, the very first thing we think of in the

pursuit of our self-regarding interests is to help ourselves at our neighbor's expense. Therefore, we think we are frustrated by Christian ethics, and that is the primary impression we adopt. We see our frustration too much, and not our great opportunities if we will only use another method than exploiting our neighbor.

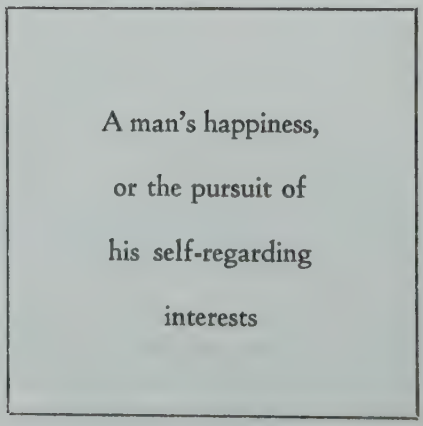
If we were not depraved we would see clearly that life is most glorious if we look at our great freedom to pursue our self-regarding interest, and exercise that freedom without climbing over a fence that does limit our freedom, namely, the fence that prohibits us from exploiting our neighbor.

The Great Free Area In Life, and Happiness Dependent on Freedom

We have now come to the more difficult aspect of the problem, and it may appear to some that we have failed to give an objective to our lives, and consequently that our lives are selfish and maybe aimless or at least not well-directed. Eventually, we shall have to answer the question — what is the purpose of life? Here we are discussing only those aspects of the purpose of life which inhere in the person himself. Part of life, we hold, must have a purpose relative to the person himself. We are described as being created in the image of God and consequently we are of some significance and more than a stock and stone in the sight of God.

We draw a square representing life and label it: a man's happiness.

A Man's Life

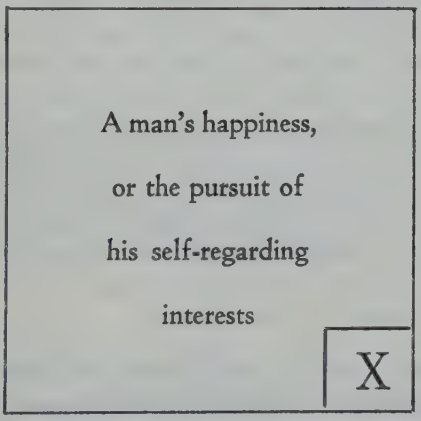


But the square must have an area fenced off. The revelation of God says the fenced off area is exploitation of the neighbor. How much shall we fence off because of that prohibition? Three fourths? One half? One quarter? How much?

If we were all really wise we would not have to fence off any area as an "exploitation of the neighbor" area, because we would know that sin does not pay, and we would not engage in it.

But to illustrate the idea we shall draw an area, which is restricted by the Second Table of the Law, as prohibited to us. We shall draw the area small, because we believe a sound perspective of life should make us realize that exploiting the neighbor does not pay. The rest of life is high, and wide, and large. We draw the same area then this way.

A Man's Life



X stands for the prohibited area. As we have drawn this, symbolically, 1/25 of "life" is prohibited to us, that is the 1/25 of life that might have consisted in exploiting the neighbor. That leaves 24/25 for ourselves, uninhibited to do what we please.

As we have already said, the perspective on life is wholly wrong if we spend our time thinking that the prohibitions which constitute *X* rob us of the joy of living.

We can conduct ourselves as a cow in the big fence, but with 1/25 of the pasture fenced off. And then as a cow we can wear

a path bare around that small area, lowing and looking in, and wanting to eat the bad grass inside that area which will eventually make us sick. And in the meanwhile neglect the fine grass in 24/25 of the area.

Sin, in our illustration, is a mistake, a fixation of our attention on what we should not want and should not have, namely, exploitation of the neighbor.

We should devote attention to the area which we neglect which constitutes 24/25 of the diagram. What does it represent?

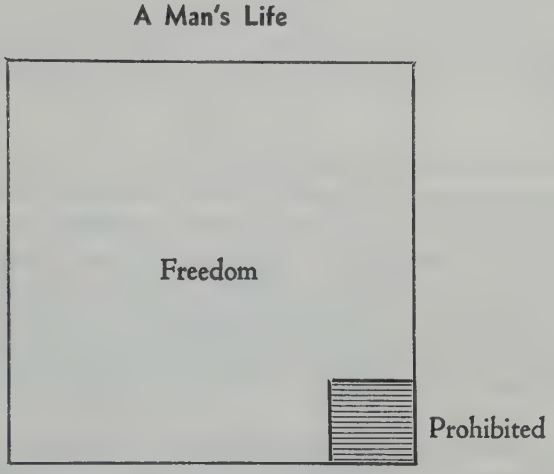
To the wise, it represents, we believe *freedom,* specifically, the freedom to acquire happiness.

Life is not worth living except you can live it your own way. Living your life your own way permits you to be a "person", an individuality, a human being, a creature created in the image of God. To live your life your own way means that you can set your own *values,* that is, prize highly what you wish to prize highly, and prize lowly what you wish to prize lowly. You can exercise your own choices. Happiness can consist only in that. To have another's *values* coerced upon you, to be required to like what you do not like, and to be required to dislike what you really like, and to choose what you do not wish to choose, and to neglect exactly what you want — all that means life is made to be not worth living. Freedom is gone. You are a slave. Death is preferable to the denial of freedom and of choice.

We can now come to a definition that is awaiting expression. What, indeed, is *loving yourself?* If *loving yourself* is the standard by which neighborly love must be measured then *loving yourself* needs a very definite definition. The answer is: *loving yourself* consists in that freedom which permits you to set your own individual values on all aspects of life and permits you to pursue those values freely (except there be no exploitation of the neighbor). And when you love your neighbor as yourself you leave him equally free to set his own values and select his own choices and live his own life (but he may not exploit you and others).

Loving yourself consists in maintaining your freedom. Loving your neighbor as yourself consists in allowing him his freedom.

We would then re-draw our chart of life and re-label it, as follows:



Of course, all our areas are symbolical. The ratios are purely arbitrary. We have used an illustration to make an idea clear. (We are aware that illustrations can have erroneous implications; but we estimated more was to be gained by the illustration than lost).

But now we find ourselves in a defensive position. We are about to be presented with the dangerous accusation that we have left God out entirely and that we are undisguised humanists.

We do not believe we have done anything of the sort. We call to the readers' attention that we have only been considering the *relation of men to men.* We have not been considering the *relation of men to God.* We considered it unwise to confuse the relation of men to men and the relation of men to God by analyzing both at the same time. Let us turn to a very brief consideration of the relation of men to God as that affects the relation of men to men.

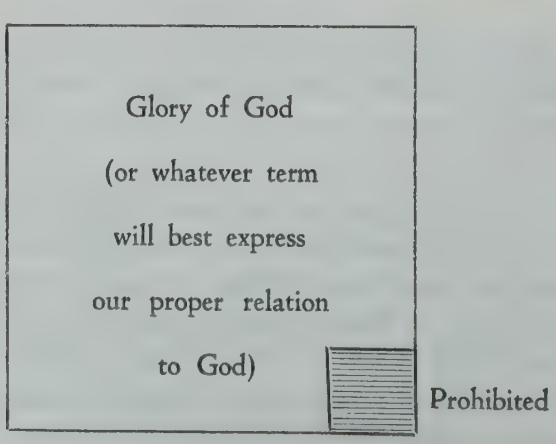
The Ultimate Purposes of Life

Christianity is more than a system of ethics; it is more than a set of principles pertaining to the relation of men to men. Christianity is a religion, and is even more concerned with the relation of men to God than of men to men.

Reverting to our chart and our 24/25 free area, what should a man do in the 24/25 of free area; does all of that free area belong to God, or does a man or his neighbors have a quit claim deed to any small part of it. There is here something of a dilemma. Either the space belongs wholly to God, or it belongs wholly to the individual, or it belong wholly to 2,400,000,000 neighbors, or it is shared in some ratio. (In regard to the neighbor, it is necessary to consider the 2,400,000,000 as *all* men are our neighbors.)

In answer to this problem we feel constrained to conclude that God has a claim on all of that area. We are insignificant creatures, with a life as transient as a mist, and with no intrinsic value of our own. God is all-important; we are unimportant.

We then obliterate all the "freedom" in the 24/25 area which we had designated by white space and assign it to God. To represent the idea we change the label.



As a consequence of this we can immediately conclude that when God has such a claim, then no neighbor has any claim on our freedom, because if the neighbor does have such a claim, then he is taking an area which belongs to God. Scripture nowhere says we must do something for the glory of the neighbor. And we consider it a piece of effrontery for a neighbor to try to crowd God out of this space.

We now face the final question about the ultimate aims of life. In what does the glory of God consist, or what are we to do to love Him with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind?

The Old Testament answer was clear, (1) have no other gods, (2) make no image, (3) do not take God's name in vain, and (4) keep the Sabbath holy. (Add to these the obligation to honor father and mother, and not injure the neighbor and the requirements of God may appear satisfied.)

If this is extended to mean an overwhelming awareness of God being a creator and governor of the Universe, and that we are dependent on Him, in the last analysis, for everything, and that he is a just but merciful and redeeming God to us, and that there is no meaning to our lives except relative to Him then we are well-pleased. We subscribe to what Paul says: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (I Corinthians 10:31)

This doing all to the glory of God* has a peculiarly Calvinist

*The information we have been able to obtain regarding what "living to the glory of God" means according to great theologians and philosophers has not been very illuminating. Merely to repeat the phrase "live to the glory of God" is not very explanatory of the phrase itself, and there is much repetition of the phrase, but little explanation. To give meaning to the idea one man says we must live in the "image of God." What that means is also not fully clear. Another man speaks of promoting the *civitas dei*, the city of God, as the embodiment of living to the glory of God. His *civitas dei* is radically different from Augustine's *civitas dei*. Living in the "image of God" is an individualistic concept. Promoting the *civitas dei* is a collectivistic concept. Any reader who has knowledge of illuminating specific ideas on what is meant by the glory of God aside from the Decalogue and other plain teachings of Scripture will do us a favor by informing us of such publications. The subject greatly interests us—that is, the *ideas* not the *words*, or better said, the *actions required* as well as the *subjective ideas*.

flavor. It is common historical knowledge that one of the prominent ideas among the Puritans and other Calvinists has been the idea of a "calling," that is, a work or position in life which should be viewed as designated to you by God, and which you should do for God's glory as best you can. We agree.

It should be noted that this Calvinist idea of a "calling" is a *practical* one. It should also be noted that it is an *individualistic* idea. It does not talk of society, or neighbor, or any group. This is in contrast to certain ideas which have considerable acceptance today.

First, there is the socialist-communist exaltation of the *state* to the position of being the ultimate goal of life. It is plainly expressed in Ferdinand Lasalle's well-known expression: "The state is God."

Then there is the well-known ideal of a leading theologian in the United States. His goal is a society with equality of all men, that is, that the end result is equality; (he does not mean equality of opportunity). This is equally a socialist ideal, but is expressed more as a socialist *society* than a socialist state.

Then there is also the rather popular ideal of the Christian Dutch educator that the development of *culture* is the principal goal of mankind. This is a modern *collectivist* version of the original Calvinist idea of an *individual calling* (*roeping* in Dutch.)

In general, there is presently a trend in thinking toward group goals rather than individual goals. The idea is group happiness rather than individual happiness. This is a modern fiction, but is a subject which needs special discussion on some other occasion.

* * *

Earlier (in the February issue) we stated simply and briefly that there are two distinct definitions of neighborly love:

1. Do not harm the neighbor and have good will toward him; and

2. Do as much for the neighbor as for ourselves.

In the preceding analysis we have outlined the first part of the view on loving the neighbor which we consider to be based on

Scripture, namely, do not harm the neighbor. The requirement to have good will toward the neighbor will be discussed in the next instalment. Before completing this instalment it will be well to outline three important objections to the erroneous idea regarding neighborly love, namely, three objections against that idea of brotherly love which holds that we should do as much for our neighbor as for ourselves. The three objections will be discussed under three headings: (1) how an erroneous law of love can contribute to chaos; (2) how an erroneous law of love can contribute to violence and tyranny; and (3) how an erroneous law of love can be insulting arrogance toward God.

Contributing To Chaos

Just for the sake of the analysis (although the proposition is not admitted), let us assume that the law of love requires that we do as much for the neighbor as for ourselves. Let us assume further that we are prepared to live according to that rule, that is, our neighbors' wishes will govern our actions as much as our own wishes do.

Assume there are five people, *A, B, C, D,* and *E.* *A* is required by the scriptural law of love, according to our assumption, to do as much for his neighbors *B, C, D* and *E* as for himself. When he does that it follows that *A* will have demonstrated that he fulfills the scriptural demands regarding brotherly love. All is well, however, until it develops that *B* wishes *A* to work with him to harvest some wheat, but *C* insists that *A* must go fishing with him, and *D* demands that *A* play a violin in *D's* orchestra and *E* complains that *A* must help mine some coal. *A* himself, instead, wishes to go shopping with his wife. Whose wishes are to prevail? If the wishes of all five are required to be heeded there will be chaos.

Of course, if *B, C, D* and *E* have proper claims on *A,* then he has proper claims on them. *A* may properly insist that his wishes prevail as much as the wishes of his fellows. We have talked of five people.

But there are 2,400,000,000 people in the world, all of whom have a claim on each other, according to the erroneous law of love.

Obviously, all the resulting intermingling and conflicting claims cannot possibly be honored. It is an utter impossibility.

Plainly, the idea that my neighbor's wishes are a legitimate claim on me is a logical absurdity. Scripture would teach an absurd doctrine if it taught that my neighbor in the *regular** affairs of life has any claim on me whatever. Scripture teaches no such absurdity. The doctrine that the law of brotherly love requires me to bow to my neighbor's demands is imbecilic.

It is one thing to be absurd; it is a worse thing to pretend a pseudo-piety. The idea that you should do as much for your neighbor as for yourself is sanctimoniousness, an insincere display of piety.

There is no more effective way to ruin the reputation of the Christian religion than to make it sanctimonious. A lot of people have caught onto the idea that much that is proclaimed by the Christian churches is twaddle.

But there is an uglier phase to this twaddle about brotherly love.

Contributing to Violence and Tyranny

That "brotherly love" as falsely defined (to do as much for your neighbor as for yourself) cannot be applied individualistically (which is the only way it can really mean anything) is so obvious that it is never tried. In practice there is a shift, and the shift is a malignant one and positively contrary to the Ten Commandments.

The shift is a simple change. *A* is supposed to do as much for *B, C, D* and *E* as for himself. If he cannot comply with their individual and *conflicting* demands, he can be made to comply with their *combined* demands. And so *B, C, D* and *E* "get together" and decide that they want *A* to do so-and-so. They present *A* with a collective demand, a law. There is no chaos any more now. *A*, so *B, C, D* and *E* decide, must work in the wheat harvest. *A* himself still wishes to go shopping with his wife but his four

*There are *special* claims which will be considered in the next instalment.

"brothers" require that he show brotherly love to them by doing their wishes. And four are more than one. The wishes of the four prevail. *A* goes to harvest.

We now have a simple violation of the sixth commandment. The sixth commandment reads, thou shalt not kill. But that is only the classic abbreviation of the commandment. Its basic meaning has never been in dispute. The basic meaning can be stated less trenchently but more completely thus, thou shalt not engage in violence or coercion against thy neighbor. When I bring compulsion, coercion or violence to bear on my neighbor in any way, except to use such means to prevent him from doing wrong, I am violating the sixth commandment. The essence of violation of the sixth commandment is that I am forbidden to impose my will on another. According to Scripture that is a sin. And that is what *B, C, D* and *E* are doing to *A* in our illustration.

Old-fashioned Calvinists have always realized this more clearly than other near-Calvinists or Arminians. The latter types have been sympathetic to sumptuary laws, that is, laws prohibiting various activities as smoking, dancing, theater attendance, card playing and drinking. In principle, the standard Calvinist idea of a minimum number of rules and no legislation or very limited legislation in the area of the adiaphora (*ad i aph' o ra*) (relatively indifferent things) appears sound. (The writer does not make this latitudinarian remark because of personal habits.)

The *eventual* outcome of the situation we described, namely where *B, C, D* and *E* were coercing *A,* is worse than majority tyranny. As soon as it is admitted that *B, C, D* and *E* may coerce *A,* then *C, D* and *E,* who still constitute a majority, may coerce both *A* and *B.* And finally a minority, say *E* alone, if he can acquire the power, may and will coerce *A, B, C* and *D.* This is inevitable if the principle has been established that there is no sacred area of freedom for each individual but that instead a neighbor may impose his will on you. It is tragic if the Christian religion is used to proclaim a law of brotherly love which law destroys the logical basis for freedom (and happiness and welfare).

The attention we are giving in the early issues of Progressive Calvinism to the requirements of brotherly love is because we have

reached the conclusion that the Christian religion is being enlisted to give support to a terrible evil. That evil is socialism-communism. By defining brotherly love incorrectly, the alleged Christian law of brotherly love becomes the ideological foundation for socialism-communism. The enemies of Christianity have subtly enlisted Christianity in their service.

Contributing to Human Arrogance

There is an even graver objection to giving an erroneous definition to the Christian law of love. What follows is, in fact, *the* objection, the final conclusive objection.

This objection is based on the First Table of the Law, and not on the Second Table of the Law. This objection, therefore, must declare that there is a sin involved which dishonors God directly, rather than only indirectly through wronging a neighbor.

Scripture declares that human wisdom requires *humility,* with that term having its full Biblical meaning. To lack that humility is to have arrogance toward God, and that in turn certainly means that a man is out of tune with the Maker of heaven and earth.

We return to our concept of 2,400,000,000 human beings operating in the area of freedom, in the area of liberty of choice (but no exploitation of the neighbor). What is involved when *B* insists on imposing his will on *A* and on many or all others? Our answer is: an arrogance as if we were God with no limitation to our minds. We make a series of affirmations:

1. Man was created in the "image of God."

2. As such, man is a rational being with a "free area" in which to make specific decisions and exercise his judgment and enjoy his own will. Man is not an automaton or a puppet of God. God gave him freedom. Man is privileged to pursue his own *values,* rather than another's values.

3. Then someone with an erroneous idea of brotherly love comes along and says that in the free area all neighbors have a claim on each and every other man. The free area is gone. There is an infinity of conflicting claims on each man.

4. To resolve the problem of conflicting claims group action is undertaken, not to restrain evil, but to control all choices so that they comply with the wishes of a majority.

5. Because the majority cannot determine all those matters specifically, they delegate the making of the decisions, coercing every man in that free area, to officers of the law, to members of a bureaucracy, that is, to a government official.

6. But the conflicts resulting from any survival of individual freedom continue. All the smaller plans must be dovetailed into larger plans, and the larger plans must finally be dovetailed into a master plan. The master plan must eventually be for a whole nation, and finally for the whole world. All of life will be rationalized (and that is not only tolerable because of the demands of brotherly love erroneously understood but is even required by such brotherly love).

7. This master plan will be of Comtian dimensions. Auguste Comte was the positivist, the founder of sociology, and the man who promoted the extension of the epistemology of the natural sciences to the social sciences, and declared that the world should be managed as an engineer manages a machine. Man, under this scheme, would "manage" the world. The top man, the Dictator, would be more of a God than the Hebrew-Christian Supreme Being, because the latter left a large area to man's freedom, whereas this Comtian scheme of things would take over everything. The man at the apex of the Plan would be more dictatorial than God. Comte was a forerunner of Marx. Marx obtained his basic idea from Comte. The boundless arrogance of the Comtian and Marxian scheme of things is an insult to the Creator and Governor of the Universe.

If unlimited arrogance is the supreme sin of mortal men, this scheme which has been outlined shows how an alleged law of love encourages and justifies a boundless human arrogance.

Mis-define the law of brotherly love by giving men a claim on their neighbors and you have destroyed freedom, justified despotism, and assumed that there can be a master mind, in an ordinary human being, as the mind of God. This is an abominable arrogance.

A Rough Classification of the Motivations Involved In The Manifestation of Brotherly Love

In order to make clear how the definition of brotherly love which has been given compares with other definitions a rough classification of the several possible ideas will now be presented. This has the additional advantage that others will be warned about making an erroneous or invidious (unfair) classification of what has been presented.

1. There is first the category (classification) of hedonism (*he' don izm*). The views here presented are not hedonism. One dictionary defines hedonism as: "The doctrine of certain Greek philosophers that pleasure of whatever kind is the only good." There is a second definition, namely, "In ethics, gross self-interest, self-indulgence." As PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is a publication in the field of ethics, the second is the definition which would apply to us if we were hedonists. But we deny that there is anything in what we have written which justifies saying that we say we believe in the pursuit of "gross self-interest" or that we believe in "self-indulgence." We have unqualifiedly maintained that the Ten Commandments *must* be observed. That leaves no room for self-indulgence or gross self-interest.

We are not hedonists.

2. There is secondly the category of eudaemonism (*u de' mon izm*). The dictionary defines eudaemonism as: "That system of ethics which defines and enforces moral obligation by its relation to happiness or personal well-being." And *eudaemonia* is given the definition "Well-being; happiness, especially in Aristotle's use, felicity resulting from life of activity in accordance with reason." If a hedonist is a man who seeks happiness by gross self-interest and self-indulgence, a eudaemonist may be defined as a man who seeks happiness by the pursuit of virtue and the use of reason.

The views here presented are not eudaemonism, although we consider eudaemonism to be the second-best philosophy of life that might be selected. To promote happiness by wisdom and virtue is not a positive evil, but only negative evil. It is still a humanist

program, and unresponsive and disrespectful to the Supreme Being. We are not eudaemonists.

3. There is a third category for brotherly love, the Hebrew-Christian view of life. Christianity, as we see it, takes over something from eudaemonism, namely, happiness through virtue and wisdom. But the Hebrew-Christian ethic is much more and is basically different. Its distinguishing features are:

a. Everything is subordinated to the Creator.

b. Virtue and wisdom are practiced (eudaemonism).

c. Goodwill is manifested toward the neighbor, by

(1) abstaining from exploitation

(2) forebearance

(3) charity

(4) declaration of the gospel.

Items c(2), c(3) and c(4) have not been discussed yet. See the next (April) issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM.

We hold to the Hebrew-Christian ethic.

4. There is also the category of the utopias (*u to' pi as*), which make *equality* the basic test of the manifestitation of brotherly love. The utopias aim at a *final* equality of men, which necessarily means they reject equality of opportunity. There have been a series of descriptions of utopias. First of all there is Plato's *The Republic,* which attempts to define justice, and in the process abolishes marriage and property and permits its philosopher-kings to sacrifice truth. Plato had a chance to apply his utopian ideas as advisor to the king of Syracuse. They would not work; the Platonian utopia failed. Then there was the pious Thomas More, who wrote a book entitled *Utopia.* Brotherly love again was to consist of *equality* — from each according to his ability to each according to his need. No property; everything communal; a *final* equality. Then Sir Francis Bacon, still more famous, wrote *The New Atlantis.* It too was a utopia. Equality was to be the goal and the characteristic of the ideal society. Then in more modern times, there is the utopia of Charles Fourier, the Frenchman — equality

in possession of women, and the various desirable things of life. Still more modern utopias are those of Bellamy, H. G. Wells, or of Orwell.

A characteristic of utopias is that they are described as being *voluntary*. The experiment of the first church in Jerusalem was a utopia. Utopias never last. They *cannot* last. They always fail to be permanent. Afterwards the participants are all worse off than before. The Christian churches have practically nowhere repeated the Jerusalem experiment. No church could long survive if it tried the experiment today. The experiment could not be successful today in Amsterdam, or Johannesburg, or Grand Rapids, or Denver. The Puritans in New England tried a utopia — equality by communal effort — but brought themselves to the abyss of starvation. Smart people do not experiment with utopias.

5. Beyond the utopias there is a fifth classification of brotherly love ideas, namely socialism-communism. Again the brotherly love ideal is *final equality* (often falsely masked under the term, justice), and the formula to accomplish that is the well-known socialist-communist law of love, from each according to his ability to each according to his need. Socialism presumably is the peaceful, non-coercive brand of this doctrine, a majority coercing a minority *by laws* is, they seem to think, not violence or contrary to the sixth commandment. Communism openly avows the use of brutal violence to establish equality, the accomplishment of equality being the evidence of true brotherly love.

Socialism and communism are merely *coercive* utopias.

6. Finally, there is a sixth classification of brotherly love, which we shall call self-abnegation. This aims at something beyond *equal* sharing or equality. The subject self-effaces himself for others. This is the zenith of idealism. There are only spasmodic manifestations of such idealism. Society keeps stumbling along without any real self-abnegation. Only men who are to be classed as fanatics even temporarily stay in the class of these idealists. (It will be necessary to distinguish carefully between self-abnegation and charity. See the April issue of Progressive Calvinism.)

Summary

The first three classifications of doctrines touching brotherly love (or deviating from it) are *individualistic,* towit, the doctrine of hedonism, eudaemonism and Christianity. The individual *himself* is the standard. The second three classifications, utopias, socialism-communism and self-abnegation, are *collectivistic.* The neighbor is the standard.

In the first three, the *self* is the center of gravity as far as the relation of men to men is concerned. In the second three, the *neighbor* (eventually always collectively) is the center of gravity. To move from the classifications which come under individualism to the classifications which come under collectivism, or vice versa, is to move from one land to a foreign land.

To define the Biblical law of love on the basis of a final equality, voluntary or coercive, that is, that the claims of the neighbor must be taken into account in the *basic* motivations pertaining to social life is a collosal error. If such an erroneous idea involves a voluntary equality, a utopia, it is a folly. If such an erroneous idea involves a coercive equality, a socialist-communist structure, it is a damnable iniquity.

On the following page a chart is presented which summarizes the various categories pertaining to man's relations to man, that is, pertaining to brotherly love.

* * *

In the next issue, in April, the third instalment of "Understanding and Misunderstanding the Hebrew-Christian Law of Love" will be presented. It will cover the ideas in the Sermon on the Mount, which were corrective of errors which stemmed from a corrupted interpretation of the ancient Biblical law of love.)

F. N.

Names Wanted

You may know people who ought to read PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. Please send in the names and addresses of such potential readers so that we can introduce them to this publication by way of sample copies.

Standards By Which Brotherly Love May Be Classified

PRACTICAL STANDARDS
"As Thyself"

Hedonism	*Eudaemonism*	*Christianity* (Ethics only)
Pursuit of happiness without restraints (involving irresponsibility toward neighbor)	Pursuit of happiness by virtue and wisdom (involving no exploitation of neighbor)	Humility plus eudaemonism plus goodwill (a) no exploitation of neighbor (b) forebearance (c) charity (d) declaration of gospel

Individualistic

IMPRACTICAL STANDARDS
As the Neighbor
(Utopias and Fanaticisms)

Utopias	*Socialism-Communism*	*Self-Abnegation*
Objective is Equality by voluntary acts	Objective is Equality by coercion	Practically non-existent idealism

Collectivistic

"Indian Not Lost, Tepee Lost"

If you get up early and catch a train from one city to another, it is pleasant to meet a friend and be able to chat. On such a trip one cold morning it was my good fortune to meet in the diner an old associate, who is now head of one of the biggest firms of industrial psychologists in the United States. It is fun to banter a wise and experienced psychologist about psychology.

But, of course, you are likely to get your own medicine back in a double dose. And a businessman is not a match for a psychologist.

The train was slowing down for the station where we were both getting off, when he told a little story about the mental "confusion" which can afflict "businessmen."

An Indian had been looking all day for his tepee, but to no avail. Night was falling, and he was completely lost. And so he sat down, and grunted: "Indian not lost, tepee lost."

Nothing, we think, could better describe the mental situation of some modern Calvinists. They have lost a *real* understanding of traditional Calvinism. Their morale has gone down because they are no longer intellectually sure of their religious heritage. The pillars in their personal spiritual church can no longer hold the roof up strongly and proudly.

The natural thing for them to do then is to look for something on the outside to brace the walls and keep them from buckling outward and letting the roof collapse. What architects call flying buttresses are needed.

"Science" is one of the flying buttresses to which men turn who have become insecure in their religious ideas. Science can be called on to buttress the buckling walls of the Christian religion. The need for the buttresses, it should be fully realized, is the loss of a good grip on what the Christian religion really is.

We believe "science" has a legitimate function in that respect. But it depends on what is meant by "science." Hitch revealed religion and true science together and you are ahead. But hitch

a revealed religion *which has been enfeebled,* by not understanding revelation well, to a *spurious* science and the net total is less than that with which you started. If your religion is in bad shape and you need a flying buttress in the form of science, by all means, choose a true science as the flying buttress.

Many Calvinists who presently have a need of flying buttresses have turned to the social sciences for help. The stunning thing is that they have chosen the worst brands of social science, that which is not science at all, but ancient error dressed up in new words. Those errors have long been blasted into discredit, but perversely men return to ancient error in a wholly reactionary manner.

But in a lighter vein we remember our Indian; we Calvinists say: *We* are not lost; tepee is lost. If you let a psychologist tell you what he thinks of such mental self-deception, you will be very uneasy.

This is the last of our introductory mailings. Only regular members of the Progressive Calvinism League or regular subscribers will receive future issues.

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